

SERVING AS A SAINT VINCENT dePAUL EXTRAORDINARY MINISTER OF HOLY COMMUNION

Who are Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (a/k/a EMHCs)?

They are men and women mandated by the Archbishop of Denver to share in the apostolic work of the Church when a true pastoral need exists as determined by the pastor of a parish.

But, am I a ‘Eucharistic Minister’ or an ‘EMHC’?

“Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion” is the correct terminology; and “EMHC” is the correct abbreviation for this position. The phrases “Eucharistic” or “communion” minister blur the distinction between the ordained and the non-ordained. EMHCs are members of the laity who have received a mandate from the Archbishop to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion when there is a genuine pastoral need at a specific parish. The responsibilities of EMHCs include the reverent and secure distribution of Holy Communion and the cleansing of the sacred vessels, if requested to do so by an ordinary minister. EMHCs do not distribute communion when a sufficient number of ordinary ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) are present at the Eucharist.

Why do we even have EMHCs?

A genuine pastoral need may arise when the number of faithful receiving Holy Communion at Mass is so great that the liturgy would be unduly prolonged. Another need may arise when ordinary ministers are unable to administer Holy Communion conveniently because of poor health or advanced age, or when they are not available because they are fulfilling other duties. In addition, grounded in charity and the corporal works of mercy, the need has arisen for mandated and well-formed EMHCs to bring the Eucharist to the sick, to the homebound, and especially as viaticum, to the dying. The requirements are that they must be at least age 18, fully initiated into the Church with the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, and must always ensure that their lives are in conformity with the teachings of the Church.

How does one become an EMHC?

A written request is made by the pastor of your parish, to the Archbishop setting forth a description of the needs of the parochial (or other) situation, the names of candidates, an assurance that all those for whom mandation is being requested are: (1) of sufficient Christian maturity, (2) with a definite relationship to the parish to be served, and (3) whose character and way of life reflect a serious and well-formed faith and moral commitment.

I already am an EMHC. Do I still need to take a class?

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should receive, *on a regular basis*, ongoing theological and spiritual formation for this holy and important undertaking. Minimally, this formation occurs once *every three years*; yearly formation is highly encouraged.

Can I be an EMHC at a parish I am visiting?

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are appointed to a particular parish or institution only and may not minister outside or beyond the parameters of their appointment. In cases of emergency, however, and for a specific occasion, all priests may appoint Extraordinary Ministers of Holy

Communion to serve on that occasion alone (See Roman Missal, Appendix 3).

Is there a blessing or commissioning ceremony for EMHCs?

Oh, yes! Most definitely! Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should be commissioned, preferably within Mass, according to the Rite of Commissioning Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, which is found in the Book of Blessings, Chapter 64, Page 709 - 713.

If I sing in the choir or help usher/lector can I be an EMHC at the same Mass?

Pastors should develop the full complement of ministries that function in the celebration of the Eucharist. Therefore, it is preferable that EMHCs do not serve as lectors, ushers, altar servers or choir members at the same Mass, but they may do so as needed to serve the liturgy.

How do I distribute Holy Communion to those with gluten intolerance?

SVdP parish has its own way of handling this situation. We maintain a separate, covered ciborium of gluten-free hosts in the tabernacle. We prefer the parishioner advise us prior to Mass of their need for a gluten free host. If, however, they do not and request one during Communion, tell them to ask a priest or deacon after Mass to retrieve one from the tabernacle for them, and it will be done. We want everyone who is properly disposed to receive actually to receive Communion.

ASPECTS OF THE MINISTRY

Recognizing that each parish church has its own particular details of design and need, here are universal considerations for EMHCs and their ministry.

1. **The Principle of Prayer:** All ministry begins and ends with humble and grateful prayer.
2. **The Principle of Attentiveness and Flexibility:** Faithfulness in liturgical ministry demands attention to details and readiness to adapt to changing circumstances.
3. **The Principle of Reverence and Uniformity:** All actions and words in ministry should be in union with and directed by the celebrant in a generous spirit of loving service to the whole Eucharistic Assembly. It should also be performed with an outwardly *joyous* attitude: *smile!*

Preparation for Service at SVdP

1. On ministry days, begin the day in prayer and quiet. Avoid distractions for at least an hour.
2. Care should be taken against casual actions, attitudes and language that distract from the celebration. Care should also be taken regarding appropriate attire.
3. Be ever mindful that you are about to fulfill *the* highest form of 'bringing Christ into the world' by directly distributing His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity to His people for them to consume into their bodies. Nothing is more intimate or personal than to invite and place God inside you. Due reverence should always be afforded this most holy of lay functions.
4. It is recommended that you arrive early when you are scheduled to serve. Arriving early allows you to be informed of any special circumstances that might occur during Mass. This also ensures that the priest, deacon, servers, musicians, and EMHCs all conduct their roles with style and grace because all are aware of their specific responsibilities for the celebration. Before sitting, sign-in, then ***please wash your hands with soap and water!***

Communion Rite

At SVdP, immediately following the Sign of Peace, EMHCs come forward and form a line in front of the first pew hand rails, and wait for about 3-5 seconds. This allows the priest/deacon to perform a head count to verify that the correct number of EMHCs is present. If you see that all six EMHCs are present, then proceed directly to the sacristies. If you are a mandated EMHC and see that someone is missing, take the initiative to fill in as needed. **This is your ministry; take responsibility for it. Be flexible in service to the people. Tend to their needs; cover as needed.**

After the brief pause, the EMHCs go through their respective sacristy, **use the hand sanitizer to cleanse their hands, rinse it off with water, then dry their hands with paper towels**. By this time, the deacon should be receiving communion. The EMHCs then form a line at each end of the altar just off of and along the edge of the rug. From there, they will receive Communion from the priest and deacon. They do not receive Holy Communion at the same time as the priest, and they never wait to receive Communion following the assembly (U.S. Norms, 38-40).

When receiving Communion, just like the rest of the faithful, including priests and deacons, EMHCs are to show a sign of reverence. The U.S. Bishops Conference has determined that the sign of reverence is a simple bow of the head before receiving both the Body and Blood of Christ.

How to Minister the Body of Christ:

1. EMHCs are each given a ciborium by the priest or deacon; **they do not take the ciboria from the altar**. They may participate in distributing Holy Communion in the form of the Precious Blood to their fellow extraordinary ministers, and to Altar Servers.
2. They move to their assigned communion station with reverence and dignity, being ever mindful to be careful not to drop or spill the Body or Blood of Christ. **If a spill occurs:**
 - a. Hosts: one or two: consume immediately and give a fresh Host to the communicant.
 - b. Hosts: many: pick them all back up into the ciborium, take the ciborium into the sacristy, pour all hosts into a bowl, add water to cover all hosts and allow them to dissolve. Once dissolved, pour the water down the sequarium.
 - c. Blood: small spill: soak it up immediately with a corner of the purificator and continue with distribution of communion.
 - d. Blood: large spill: unfold your purificator completely and cover the spill to prevent people from walking on it. We'll use additional purificators after Mass to soak it all up. Then soak the purificators in a bowl of water and pour it down the sequarium.
3. At SVdP, the stations are as follows:
 - a. Priest and Deacon, with a ciborium, stand at the bottom of the steps at the edges of the center aisle. (Positions 1 & 2 on the attached diagram)
 - b. The EMHCs distributing the Precious Blood to communicants coming from the priest or deacon stand up on the first step about ten feet away, so they can see that Christ is consumed immediately at both ciboria stations. (Positions 3 & 4)
 - c. The EMHCs with the other two ciboria stand against the hand rail about three feet in from the center aisle. (Positions 5 & 6)
 - d. The EMHCs with the other two communion cups of Precious Blood stand along the

- hand rail about three feet from the opposite/outside end of the hand rail (Positions 7 & 8), so they can see that Christ is consumed immediately. **Never allow anyone to pass who hasn't.** You're our final line of defense against illicit removal of the host.
- e. Positions 5 & 7 first serve the St. Joseph Pews, then assume their regular stations.
 - f. Positions 6 & 8 first serve the rear of the church/Choir, then assume their stations.
4. As the communicant approaches the host is offered to the communicant with the words, **“The Body of Christ.”** Hold it up just below your line of vision, *smile*, and make good eye contact. This is a reverent activity, but also joyous so smiling is a good thing. Hold the host as near to the edge as you can and still have a firm control over it. If someone approaches and chooses to receive on the tongue, you'll be ready to place it there without touching your finger to their tongue.
- a. The communicant responds “Amen!” If they fail to say “Amen!” say it for them.
 - b. Nothing else is said (such as the communicant's name).
 - c. The communicant chooses whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue.
 - d. If they receive in the hand, be certain that they immediately place the host in their mouth before leaving your station.
 - e. If they walk off with it, go after them and politely tell them that it must be consumed here and now.
 - f. Sometimes, they will say they're taking it to someone. Advise them that we have a separate protocol for that and to come talk to Deacon after Mass to make arrangements, but that they must consume the host immediately.

How to Minister the Blood of Christ:

1. As those who desire to receive the Blood of Christ come forward, the chalice is offered to the communicant with the words, **“The Blood of Christ.”**
 - a. The communicant responds “Amen!” and the chalice is handed to them.
 - b. If they fail to say “Amen!” say it for them. Nothing else is said.
 - c. After they return the chalice, the rim is wiped both *inside and out* with a purificator. This is best achieved by draping the purificator over the back of your hand and utilizing the thumb and two fingers to hold the purificator in a folded position to apply slight pressure to both the inside and outside edge of the rim simultaneously. This technique will be demonstrated during training.
 - d. The chalice is then rotated slightly, about an eighth of a turn and handed to the next communicant.
 - e. While that next communicant is taking the Precious Blood, the purificator is adjusted slightly to an unused part of the linen, and then when the chalice is returned, it is wiped again and presented to the next communicant, and the linen adjusted again.
 - f. The chalice is never passed from one communicant to another.
 - g. **EMHCs must always make it their duty to prevent a communicant from passing the chalice while still holding the Body of Christ.** It is to be consumed immediately by the communicant. Block their path and tell them this if necessary.
 - h. A communicant is never allowed to self-communicate with the Blood of Christ by intincting (dipping their host in the blood). Intinction, can only be ministered by a bishop or priest.

- i. A communicant is not permitted to pass the chalice to another communicant.
- j. While distributing the Precious Blood, never pour the Blood from one chalice to another, so as to fill an empty chalice with Precious Blood at a communion station.
- k. **The EMHCs with the Precious Blood chalices will necessarily be in the best positions to ensure that no one gets past them without having consumed the Body of Christ. They must keep watch on all communicants receiving the Body of Christ to ensure that Jesus is consumed there, and not taken anywhere away from the altar.**

What do I do if someone has their arms crossed over their chest?

This is the sign that, for whatever reason known only unto the communicant, they are not prepared to receive communion and want to receive a blessing. Keep it short. Suggestion: *“May the love of Christ be in your heart.”* Or: *“Receive Jesus in your heart.”* The communicant is never touched, nor do EMHCs make the sign of the cross to bless them.

Following the Distribution of Holy Communion:

1. **EMHCs return the ciborium/chalices to the Deacon** at the altar for purification.
2. Any remaining Precious Blood must be consumed at the altar after the distribution of Holy Communion by the EMHCs, who may be assisted by other EMHCs or the Clergy.
3. *Hand your ciborium or chalice to Deacon, rather than placing it directly upon the altar.*
4. If everyone has returned to the altar at about the same time, step away from the rug a few steps on either side near the door to the sacristy and wait. When Jesus is reposed in the tabernacle and the priest or deacon genuflects, EMHCs genuflect or perform a ‘profound bow’ as well. A ‘profound bow’ is from the waist and the eyes look down at the floor.
5. Then return to your pews.

Purifying Sacred Vessels:

1. The purification of the sacred vessels occurs at the altar by the deacon or priest; or they may be cleansed immediately after Mass.
2. If they are to be cleansed after Mass, the vessels are suitably covered at the credence table on a corporal. (GIRM 183)
3. Purification is ordinarily done by the deacon. EMHCs may conduct a more complete hygienic washing after Mass after the vessels have been purified.
4. Remember: these are Sacred Vessels that just contained the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. They are NOT ordinary “dishes.” Please treat them accordingly.

Finally, **THANK YOU** for volunteering to serve!!! We couldn’t offer both species of Christ at all Masses without your willingness to volunteer and become mandated for this highest honor of lay service!